

### **Imperial Messengers' Gate (Chokushimon)**

The Imperial Messengers' Gate, which faces the Shaka-dō Hall, was first built when the temple was founded in 863 and rebuilt several times afterward, most recently in 1830. Between 794 and 1868, when the emperor's court was in Kyoto, the gate was used by imperial messengers when they entered and exited the temple compound, but today the gate is very rarely used.

Due to the proximity of the imperial court, many large temples in Kyoto have or had a *chokushimon* to facilitate communication with the imperial palace. Most of these gates, including the one at Eikandō, are “four-legged gates” (*shikyakumon*), single-story structures supported by four pillars that straddle the wall on both sides. This style of gate construction, which can also be called a “Chinese gate” (*karamon*) features a hip-and-gable roof (*irimoya-zukuri*) and undulating eaves (*karahafu*) on both the interior and exterior.

The roof is thatched with hinoki bark, and the eaves are carved in a *karakusa* pattern with images of dragons. Just under the eaves on either side of the gate are a pair of simplistically carved *baku*, mythological tapir-like creatures that are said to ward off bad dreams and other misfortunes.